

# **Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act**

## **Analysis and Recommendations**

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## **Preface**

This review of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act was requested by the Rhode Island Justice Commission. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act is the only program directly administered by the Commission. It can justifiably be proud of its administration of the Act. Among the many people interviewed regarding this program, no one had anything negative thing to say about Justice Commission personnel or the manner by which the agency implements the Act. To the contrary, both were uniformly described as “wonderful,” a rare accolade applied to any government agency indeed.

The Justice Commission sought an evaluation that:

1. Describes and summarize the activities funded by the Act.
2. Obtains information about service delivery for program staff, which will enable staff to make improvements.
3. Determines the effectiveness of the programs for participants.
4. Documents that the objectives of the local programs and the State program have been met.
5. Develops recommendations about modifications to the Act.

Among local programs there are, of course, variations in the administrative logic and implementation strategies that are applied. These differences are dictated by the nature of the crime prevention problem, demonstrated local need and supporting neighborhood resources, level of funding, the nature of the neighborhood activities, their continuity over time, the level of law enforcement involvement, the nature of technical support, as well as estimates of success and participant satisfaction.

The task of the evaluation is to systematically collect information on these program dimensions, documenting patterns of success, and ultimately recommending ways to improve administration and programming. We have attempted to accomplish this constrained by both time and resources.

Our success in this venture is due, in large part, to the cooperation of the many crime prevention volunteers, police officers, and public officials who spoke with and assisted us, including:

Rhode Island Justice Commission (RIJC):

Gina Caruolo, Acting Director  
Gail Perrera, Crime Prevention Coordinator  
David LeDoux, Grants Manager

Crime Prevention Planning Committee (CPPC):

Connie Noblet, community member  
Denise Owens, Roger Williams University and former President of RICPA

Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association (RICPA)

Major Tom Gontarek, President  
Virginia Bowry, Bryan College, Director of Membership  
Charles Michalides, Secretary

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Programs:

Mt. Hope Learning Center;  
Lenny Long, President  
Shannon Dolan, Executive Director  
Jen Kodis, Program Coordinator

West Elmwood Housing and Development Corporation  
Sharon Conrad-Wells  
Robin Frye, Director

Riverbend Crime Watch  
Gail Leoni

Nausauket Good Neighbor Association  
&  
Warwick Citizen Police Academy Alumni  
Darlene Burke

Community Policing

George Pereira, Providence  
Dave Delbonis, Warwick

Office of the Attorney General

John Reiss, Crime Prevention Specialist, Office of the Attorney General  
James Baum, Special Assistant Attorney General

As well as:

Sisan Smallman, Assistant Probation & Parole Administrator, Adult Probation and Parole

Joanne Hickey, Supervisor, Safe Streets, Department of Family, Children and Youth

Jonathan Houston, Executive Director, Justice Assistance

Hope Janke, Ohio Criminal Justice Services

To all of the above, we express our gratitude and appreciation.

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## **Table of Contents**

Preface.....	2
Background and Development of the Program.....	6
Personnel and Funding.....	7
Organization of the Program.....	9
Technical Assistance.....	9
Eligibility Requirements .....	10
Diversity Among Funded Programs .....	11
Program Qualitative Review .....	12
State of the Art in Crime Prevention Strategies: Then and Now .....	22
The Importance of Broken Windows.....	24
Crime Prevention: Research Findings .....	25
Alternatives to Crime Rate as a Measure of Community Health.....	27
An Example of a Successful Program: .....	30
Mt. Hope Learning Center .....	30
The Role of Community Policing (and what happens when it isn't working) .....	32
Other Related Community Crime Prevention Initiatives.....	38
The Importance of Involving Youth .....	45
The Importance of Collaboration.....	48
The Importance of Collective Efficacy.....	50
Summary .....	52
Recommendations.....	55
Appendix A. Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program Organization.....	60

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”** Margaret Mead

### **Background and Development of the Program**

The Rhode Island crime prevention program was created in 1986 through legislation, R. I. Gen. Laws §42-96-1. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act directs the Rhode Island Justice Commission to promote “heightened awareness and practice of community members in techniques stressing the reduction of opportunities for crimes to occur and the increased possibility of police apprehension of criminals 42-96-2(5).” In addition, the Commission shall render “technical services and assistance” to crime prevention organizations as well as to “encourage the formation, organization and growth of new (crime prevention) organizations (42-96-6).”

The specific language of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act focuses on “tenant-lobby, street-foot patrols, and auto patrols, home and business security surveys and dispersal of crime prevention literature and equipment (42-96-2(5)).” This suggests two different crime prevention strategies: 1) augmenting standard police patrols with parallel citizen-based volunteer efforts and 2) hardening crime targets, both residential and business. The Act is designed to promote activities that have a “positive effect on the prevention of crime and the reduction of the fear of crime within the neighborhood (with particular) focus when necessary to address the needs of senior citizens (42-96-3).” Organizations to be funded include government as well as community agencies that coordinate their activities with police.

## **Personnel and Funding**

Until 1994, the Justice Commission either contracted out for or utilized its funding to hire a crime prevention coordinator within that office. The initial coordinator was a graduate student at the University of Rhode Island, Pam Dieter, followed by Scot Avedisian, now Mayor of Warwick, and Laurie Agag. Current staff resources are more limited. The Justice Commission has assigned one part-time staff person, Gail Pereira, as the Crime Prevention Coordinator. Ms Pereira started in this position in 1994. Although she serves as the Crime Prevention Coordinator, her responsibilities extend beyond administration of the Act so that her position is funded with federal Byrne and requisite state matching funds.

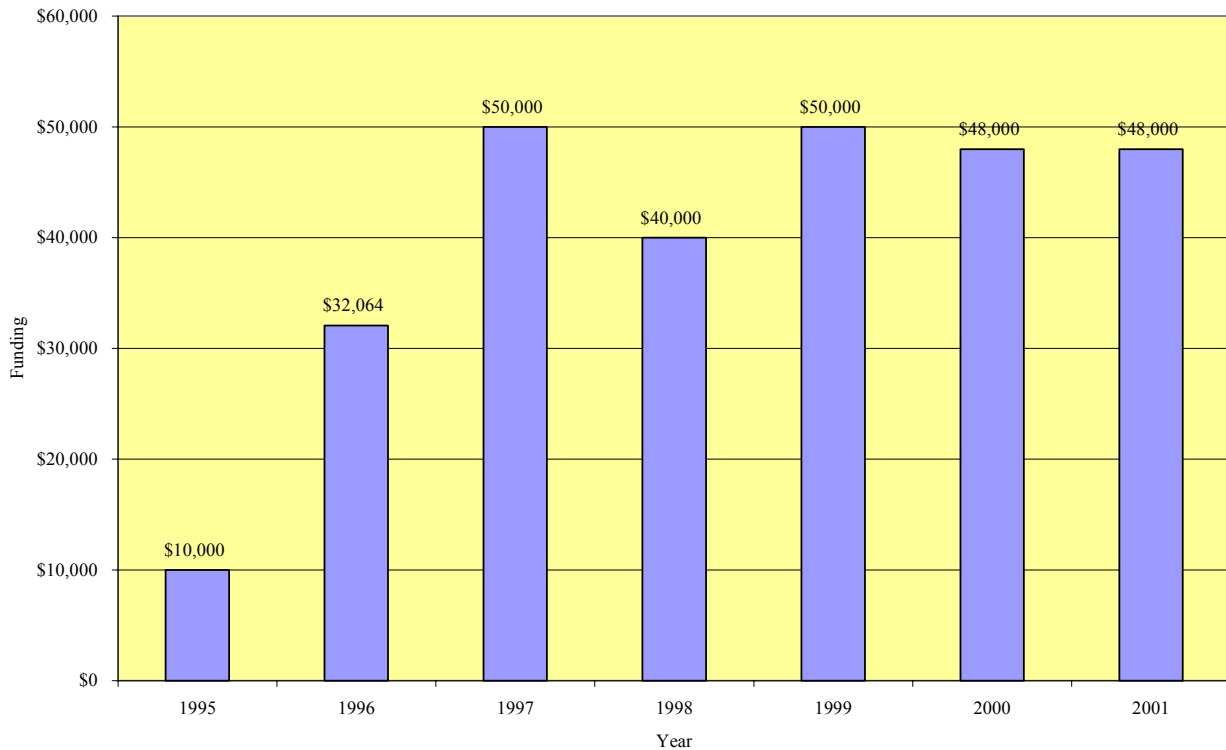
Initial funding of the Act was approximately \$100,000 earmarked by the legislature although at one point funding reached more than \$150,000. The currently level of funding is much lower. As a result of shrinking Justice Commission budgets, funds allocated for crime prevention grants have not exceeded \$50,000 over the last eight years, fluctuating between \$10,000 in 1995 and \$50,000 in 1999. The funding for the next fiscal year has been set at \$45,000. See Figure 1.

Since 1995, all designated neighborhood crime prevention funding from the Commission has been allocated in grants to community and government agencies. This makes Rhode Island's program unique across the country. While many point to the comprehensive role of crime prevention in Ohio's state government and that state's financial commitment to it, Ohio does not directly provide money to community-based crime prevention groups.

Despite the fact that Rhode Island's allocation to the Neighborhood Crime Prevention is small, its impact on the many community-based groups and individual police departments it funds with small, but strategic cash grants is significant. A lot of good appears to come from a very small pot of state resources. As Crime Prevention Planning Committee member Connie

Noblet aptly summarized, “(T)he program is able to take advantage of the fact that Rhode Island is a small intimate state that knows its people.”

Figure 1. Total Allocation (1995-2001)



*Asked if such small grants as those provided by the Crime Prevention Act are helpful, a neighborhood learning center director immediately responded: “They are not small to us!” In fact, the flexibility of crime prevention grants allows agencies such as Mt. Hope Learning Center leverage to obtain additional monies, bringing additional resources to the state. In addition, the granting of funds up front, rather than for reimbursement of expenditures, literally allowed Mt. Hope to keep the lights on in times of fiscal crisis.*



Importantly, despite the fact that the program is modestly funded, the Justice Commission has made the most of the resources available to them by developing a cadre of dedicated, committed, and increasingly knowledgeable citizens volunteers, often partnered with police officers who by themselves or with the support of their departments are beginning to realize the full potential of community crime prevention. These citizen volunteers and police officers not only administer the grants program, giving their time and expertise to make up the Crime Prevention Planning Committee that allocates crime prevention act funding, but are responsible for nurturing and spreading crime prevention programs across the state.

### **Organization of the Program**

Justice Commission personnel, in particular the Crime Prevention Coordinator, work collaboratively with two volunteer bodies – the Crime Prevention Planning Committee (CPPC) and the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association (RICPA). See Appendix A for the organizational chart. CPPC assists in the administration of the grants by reviewing and making recommendations regarding program funding. RICPA provides technical assistance in crime prevention techniques as well as educational information. The program relies heavily on the work of volunteers, both community members and police personnel.

### **Technical Assistance**

To a large extent, the Justice Commission relies on the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association to provide “technical services and assistance to organizations” across the state to promote crime prevention (§42-96-6). The Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association is entirely run by volunteers. It has no paid staff yet is able to offer periodic crime prevention training and public crime prevention education and technical assistance, filling a void created by the absence of any statewide law enforcement campaign by chiefs or others. While the

Association receives significant funding each year from the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program (significant in terms of percentage of the total funds allocated), unlike nationally recognized crime prevention programs in Ohio, Virginia and Western Pennsylvania and elsewhere, it operates without any paid staff.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Activities funded under this Act are required to be aimed at reducing crime and increasing the probability of apprehending offenders. Specifically, the statute lists the following eligibility requirements:

- Collaboration with local police (or with community members/neighborhood groups if funding is granted directly to police departments). The preference is that neighborhood groups would directly apply for funding with the backing of their local police.
- Officers, directors and members of the organization should represent the residents and the legitimate interests of the neighborhood.
- The majority of directors should live in the neighborhood.
- Neighborhood volunteers should be used to carry out all activities. No staff should be paid with Neighborhood Crime Prevention monies with the exception of youth stipends for activities proven to be effective in reducing crime.
- The organization should provide training in approved crime prevention techniques to all volunteers.
- The neighborhood group has been in existence for at least one year within the three years prior to application. New groups may apply for funding through their local police department.
- The applicant must demonstrate the capability to accomplish the task(s), including having appropriate staff, office space, and expertise.
- Geographic boundaries must be recognized as an established neighborhood.
- The neighborhood must have a need for the activity(ies).
- Proposed activities must have face validity, in that they seem likely to have a positive impact on crime and/or will reduce fear of crime.
- Funding must not result in a reduction of police services.
- Special attention must be paid to the needs of senior citizens.

Additionally, organizations are required to maintain financial records, provide information regarding their manner of outreaching to the community, and develop a sustainability plan.

**“I really believe that if we take care of the little stuff, we won’t have the big problems to take care of...”**

Warwick community police officer David Delbonis, an eighteen year veteran of the force with six years in community policing

### **Diversity Among Funded Programs**

Although all funded programs must meet the same requirements listed above, crime control programs must, out of necessity, be as varied as the communities in which they operate. What may contribute to crime control in a

neighborhood of Providence, for example, may be totally out of place in the community of Oakland Beach in Warwick.

Again, the original intent of the act was to fund activities that would “develop and strengthen a sense of neighborhood identity and a constructive attitude in that neighborhood.”<sup>1</sup> However, it is not necessarily true that the same types of activities will be effective and accepted in different cities and towns, or even within different neighborhoods within the same city or town. The Act allows for the neighborhood organizations to determine what they need and the Justice Commission and CPPC have not attempted to rigidly steer crime prevention efforts in any particular direction. This has allowed funded programs to alter over time as the state of the art in crime prevention evolves.

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<sup>1</sup> RIJC website: actually the Act itself section 42-96-2

## **Program Qualitative Review**

In completing a qualitative review of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act, we have attempted to answer two questions.

- 1. Has the evolution in funding been appropriate and consistent with the intent of the Act?**
- 2. Have grants had a generally positive effect on the prevention of crime and on the reduction of the fear of crime within neighborhoods?**

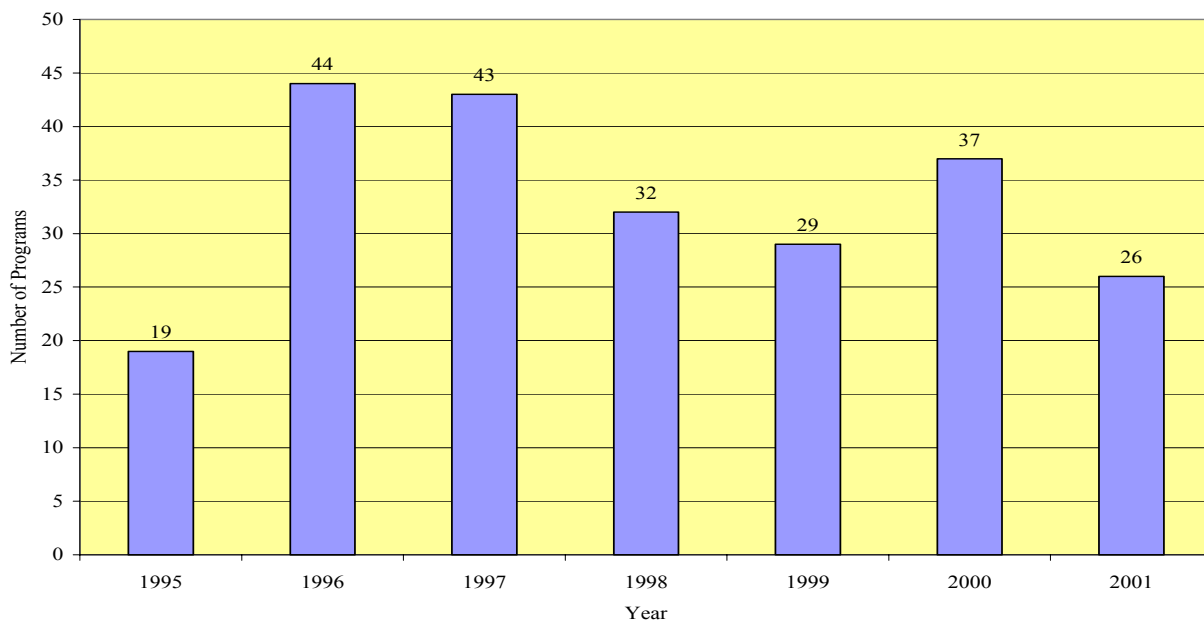
The most immediate answer to both is “yes.” The evolution in the implementation of the Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act has mirrored that of crime prevention efforts nationally. By and large, the grants generally positively effect prevention of crime and reduce the fear of crime within targeted neighborhoods.

Despite the original intent of the act to fund traditional crime prevention programming activities such as target hardening and neighborhood watch, the act does not limit the types of activities funded as long as they reduce crime or the fear of crimes. The range of activities has changed over time. In fact, in the last seven years, funded programs have initiated many new types of activities including;

- Block parties
- Citizen Police Academies
- Learning Resource Centers
- National Night Out Against Crime activities
- Neighborhood clean-ups
- Neighborhood watch signs
- Newsletters

In the last seven years (1995-2001), 230 different programs have been funded, representing 114 organizations. Of these 72 were lead by community-based organizations and 42 were lead by police departments. See Figure Two.

Figure 2: Number of Programs Funded (1995-2001)



We also examined the distribution of programs over the past seven years to determine whether there has been a change over time in the types of activities offered in comparison to the intentions of the original act. Many new types of crime prevention activities have been implemented, including block parties and festivals, youth programming, and neighborhood beautification, but close examination reveals that these new program types did not replace traditional programming. The traditional approaches continue to be implemented including crime watch, newsletters and information distribution, target hardening and programs targeted at seniors. While a summary review of this funding indicates that 58 grants have been allocated for neighborhood watch programs, activities specifically mentioned in the Act, nine relatively large grants have also gone to learning resource centers in half a dozen cities as well as other grants designed to provide an assortment of after-school programming for youth. See Table 1 for the distribution of program types.

Table 1: Distribution of Program Types (1995-2001)

<b>Traditional Programs</b>	<b>total</b>		
crime watch	58		
newsletters/information	51		
hardening targets	24		
elderly residents project (check/shovel)	16		
senior citizen education/activities	15		
<b>New Programs</b>	<b>total</b>	<b>New Programs</b>	<b>total</b>
block parties/events/festivals	83	safewalk/transportation	6
neighborhood beautification	48	teen service projects	6
seminars/meetings	48	youth-senior	6
youth activities	42	community policing	5
Halloween safety	23	meet officials (government/police)	4
recreational	16	neighborhood youth council	3
citizens' police academy	15	police-youth	3
national night out	14	self-defense/anti-victim	3
child id	11	mentoring	2
learning center	9	needs assessment surveys	1
after school program	6	youth-family	1

As this is a state-wide initiative, the distribution of funding to cities and towns was inspected to determine gaps in funding. This inspection revealed that, in the last seven years of funding, all cities and towns of Rhode Island, with the exception of four, have received Neighborhood Crime Prevention funding. These four cities and towns have the lowest crime

rates in the state, may not have the need for crime prevention programming, and therefore may not have applied for funding. See Table 2.

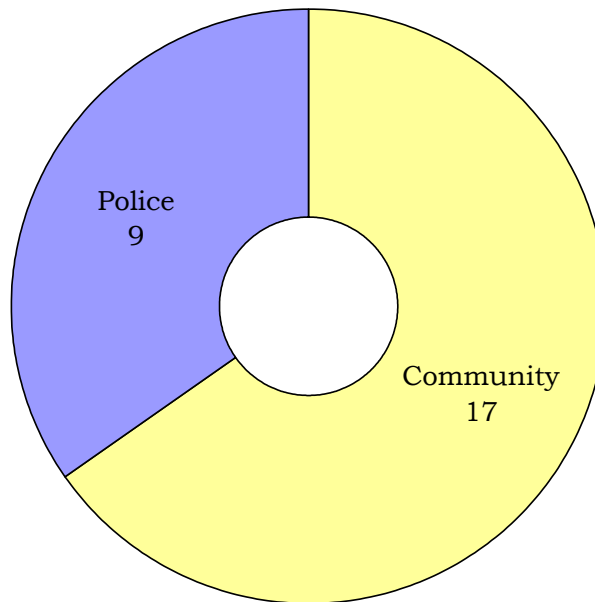
Table 2: Number of Programs Funded by City/Town (1995-2001)

Cities/Towns	Total	Cities/Towns	Total	Cities/Towns	Total
Barrington	3	Glocester	2	Providence	43
Bradford	1	Hopkinton	4	Richmond	1
Bristol	4	Jamestown	1	RICPA	5
Brown University	3	Johnston	11	Scituate	1
Burrillville	2	Lincoln	2	Smithfield	5
Central Falls	3	<b>Little Compton</b>	<b>0</b>	South Kingstown	2
<b>Charlestown</b>	<b>0</b>	Narragansett	2	Tiverton	1
Coventry	1	<b>New Shoreham</b>	<b>0</b>	Warren	2
Cranston	14	Newport	3	Warwick	44
Cumberland	5	North Kingstown	3	West Greenwich	3
East Greenwich	1	North Providence	5	West Warwick	10
East Providence	5	North Smithfield	1	Westerly	9
Exeter	2	Pawtucket	18	Woonsocket	4
<b>Foster</b>	<b>0</b>	Portsmouth	4		

Focusing on the last year of funding, as is expected for this program, due to the availabilities of extremely limited monies, the program was not able to fund all of the programs that apply. In the last round of funding twenty-nine neighborhood and police organizations applied and of those twenty-six programs received funding. Analysis of the specifics of these programs reveals that of the twenty-six programs, seventeen were lead by community-based

organizations and nine were lead by police departments. See Figure 3 for breakdown. Table 3 lists the funded programs.

Figure 3. Funded Projects by Organization Type



In addition, focusing on statewide coverage revealed that twelve (of 34) cities and towns as well as Brown University and RICPA were funded in 2002. See figures 4 and 5 for funding breakdowns and numbers of programs funded by city/town. The majority of the funding dollars went to Providence, Warwick, and Cranston. One of the largest grants was awarded to RICPA to provide technical assistance and training to programs statewide.



Table 3: Neighborhood Crime Prevention Programs Funded in 2001.

<b>Crime Prevention Programs (2001)</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Apponaug Improvement Association	\$700.00
Brown University Police	\$500.00
East Providence Little Neck Crime Watch	\$495.00
Federal Hill Community Coalition	\$2,050.00
Glenwood Crime Prevention & Improvement Association	\$160.00
Glocester Police	\$980.00
Johnston Police	\$800.00
Johnston Police Explorers	\$850.00
Mt. Hope Learning Center	\$5,975.00
Nausauket Good Neighbors Association	\$2,040.00
North End Crime Watch	\$1,271.00
North End Crime Watch and Community Dev.	\$1,100.00
Oxford Place/Garden's Tenant's Association	\$200.00
Pawtucket Police	\$1,022.50
Pleasant View Business Association	\$1,129.00
Pontiac Village Association, Inc.	\$500.00
Portsmouth Police	\$1,050.00
Potowomut Watch	\$2,343.00
Riverbend Crime Watch	\$981.36
Smithfield Police	\$675.00
Stadium Neighborhood	\$3,366.00
Warwick Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association	\$1,700.00
West Elmwood Housing Development Corp.	\$3,850.00
West Warwick Police Department	\$1,000.00
Woonsocket Police Department	\$900.00
RICPA (training and technical assistance)	\$12,362.00

Further analysis, however, revealed that the Justice Commission's funding practices are logical, taking into consideration population levels as well as crime rates. The correlation between the number of programs funded and crime rate was strongly positive ( $r= 0.91$ ) as was

the relationship between the number of programs funded and population ( $r=0.92$ ). This means that more grants were given to communities with more crime and more people. In addition, comparisons of the level of funding and population was strongly positive ( $r=0.91$ ), indicating that more money was granted to cities and towns with more people. Finally, the number of grants given to cities and towns and population was strongly positive ( $r=0.92$ ), such that a higher number of grants were given to cities and towns with more people. This means that the Justice Commission and the CPPC has been successfully allocating this grant money to the communities that need it.

Figure 4: Funding Breakdown.

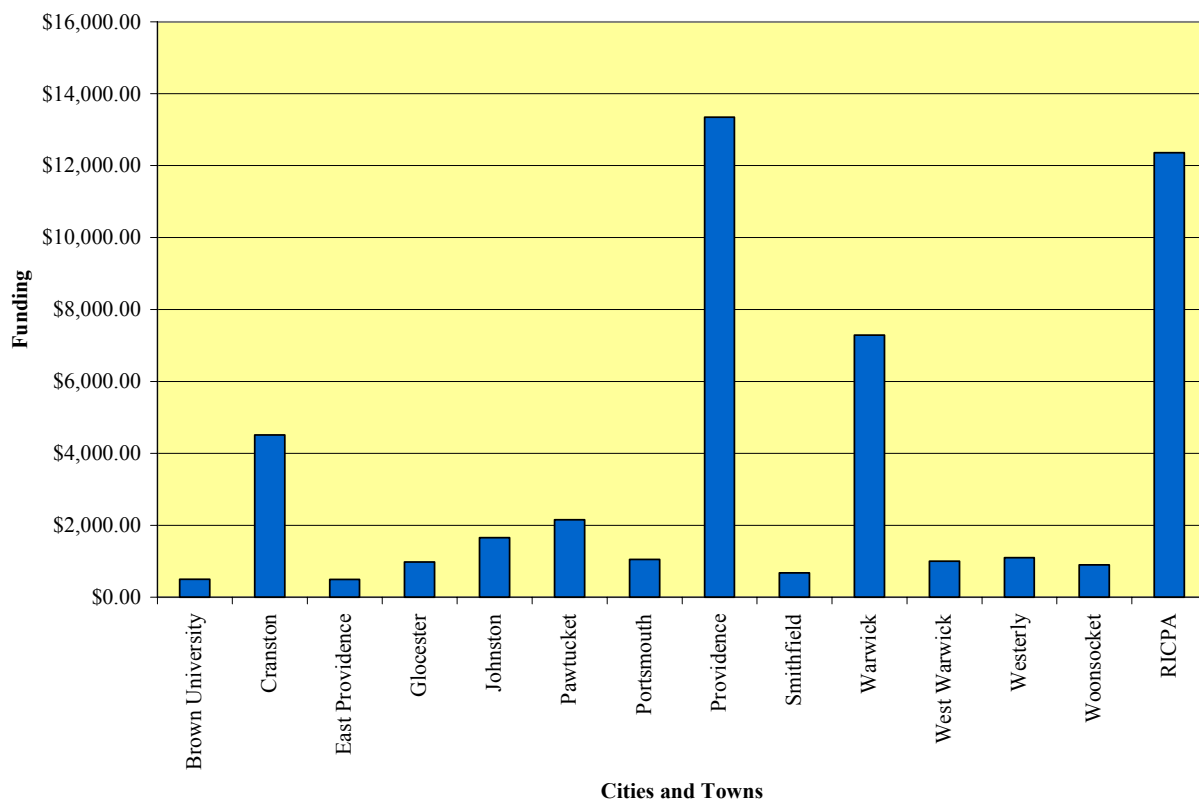
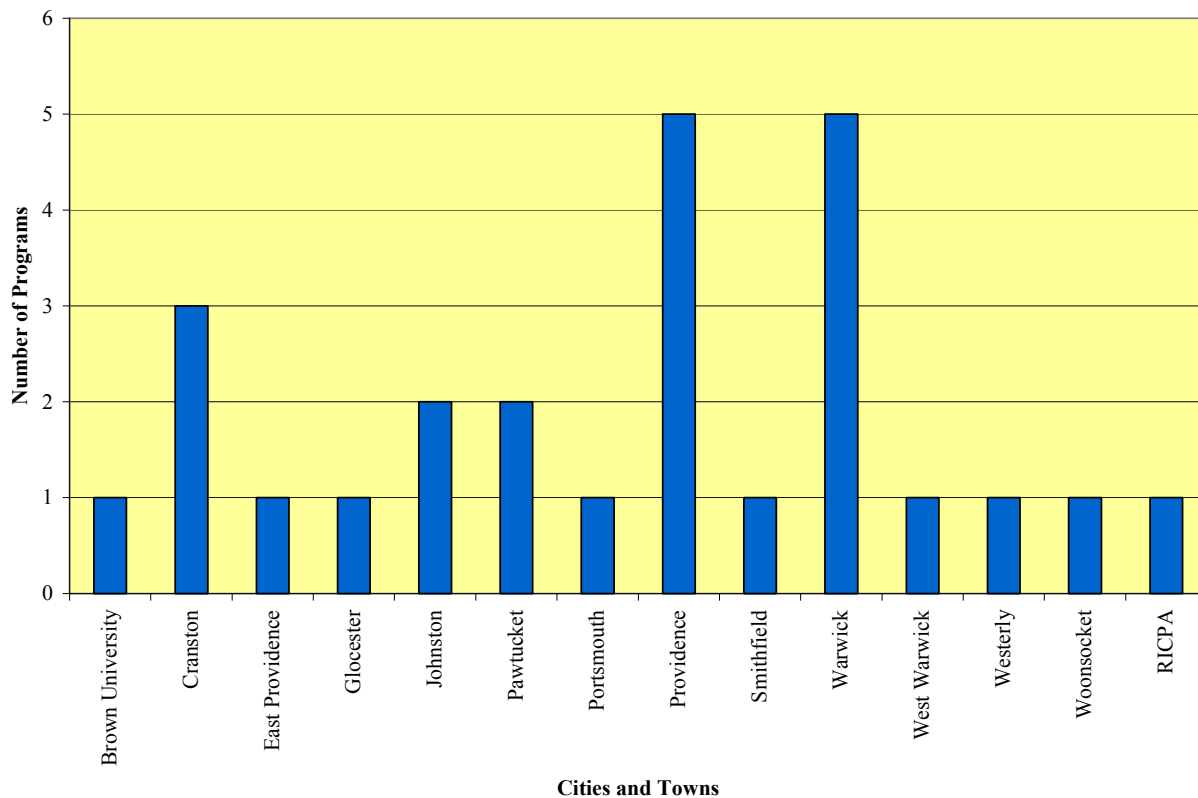
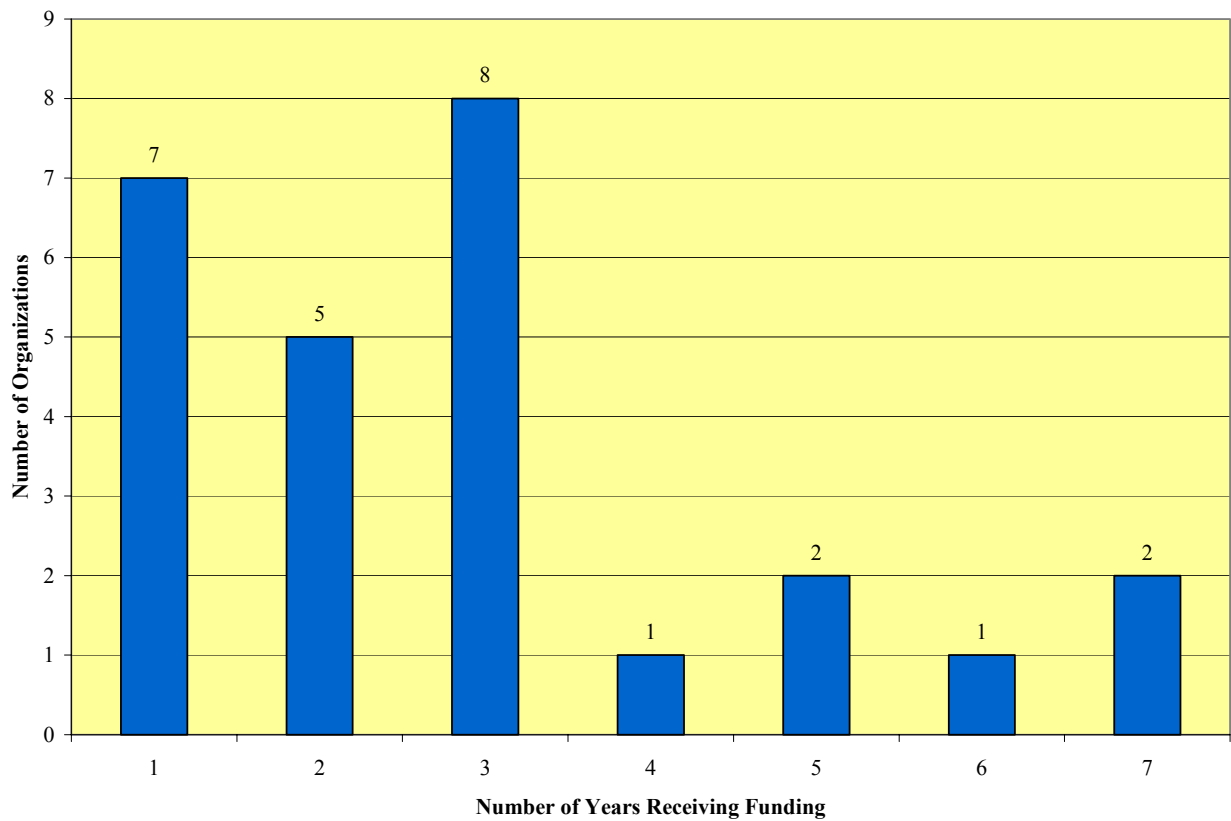


Figure 5: Number of funded programs by city and town.



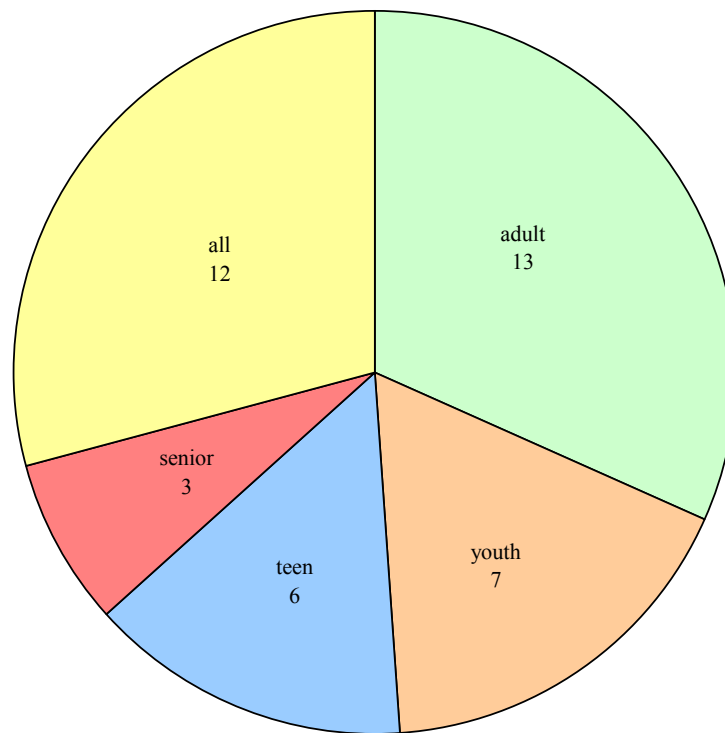
Despite the fact that the focus of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act is to fund new programs, nineteen of the programs funded in 2001 were continuing programs and seven were new. The range in longevity was one to seven years. But the vast majority of these programs (77%) were funded for three or fewer years. See Figure 6 for longevity breakdowns.

Figure 6: Program Longevity (2001)



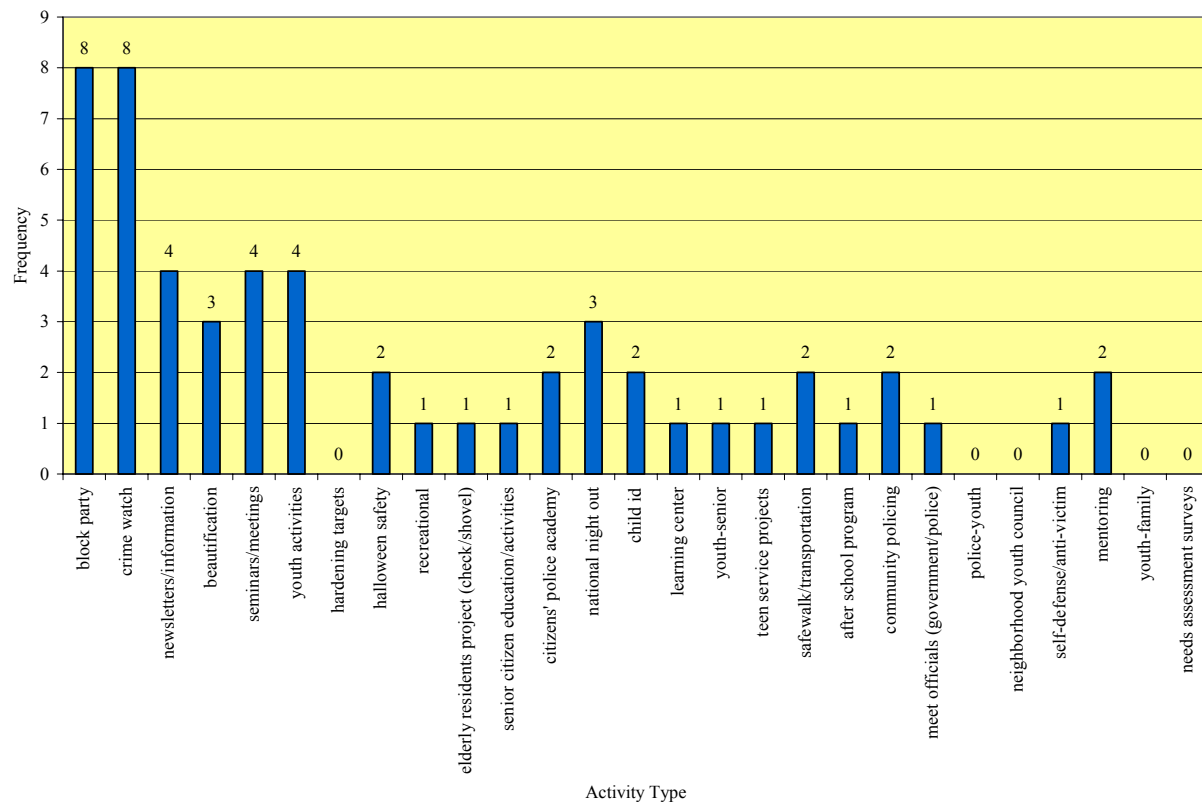
As directed by the Act, the last year of funding included activities aimed at seniors (n=3) as well as adults (n=13), youth (n=7), adolescents (n=6), and all age groups (n=12). Importantly, 32% of activities were specifically focused on providing programming for youth and adolescents. See Figure 7 for the age group breakdown.

Figure 7: Target Age Groups for Funded Programs (2001)



Many types of activities were funding during the last year including traditional crime prevention programming (e.g. neighborhood crime watch, newsletters and information,), and new crime prevention strategies (e.g. youth oriented programming, self-defense classes, block parties and events, neighborhood beautification projects). See Figure 8 for frequencies by activity type.

Figure 8: Funded Programs by Activity Type



## **State of the Art in Crime Prevention Strategies: Then and Now**

Research findings concerning the history and state of the art of crime prevention strategies document a dramatic evolution over the past several decades. Previous strategy included augmenting police coverage with citizen's watch groups and hardening targets by employing lights, locks, alarms, and other security measures. The current state of the art in crime prevention focuses on an increasingly community-focused and proactive approach. Rather than ceding the streets to an undesirable element, residents are encouraged to return to the streets and become increasingly invested, if not passionate about their neighborhoods.

Addressing and controlling crime is very important, however, just as important (if not more important) is managing residents' fear of crime. The problem is cyclic: The more crime people perceive in their communities, the more the people retreat- becoming housebound and afraid to venture out, thereby affording the criminal element more opportunities to take over the streets.

At the time of the enactment of the Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act, the state of the art in crime prevention focused primarily on “target hardening”, employing locks, lights, and alarms. Ironically, as a direct result of this exclusive reliance on security measures, communities inadvertently created public places where law-abiding citizens feared to venture and in effect relinquished public spaces, streets and, in some cases, entire neighborhoods to criminals.

These unhealthy communities are characterized by deep-seeded fear. Traveling to and from school evokes fear in children and their parents, playgrounds and parks are too dangerous for recreation, adults fear venturing outside, even during daylight hours, areas known as gang hangouts, drug dens, or out of control households are avoided, local businesses close early, cannot afford to offer delivery services or protect themselves against theft and vandalism.

This type of approach toward crime, basically locking up everything and everyone valuable (and locking up the criminals as well), was ultimately found to be ineffective. Crime prevention professionals and researchers gradually began to appreciate this reality. As the National Crime Prevention Council President explains: “Passionate civic involvement and a commitment to community vitality must go hand in hand” with the former activities to form healthy communities. This combination of approaches constitutes “the best antidote against crime.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Calhoun, J. (2000). Crime Prevention in the New Millennium, National Crime Prevention Council.

One of the most striking examples of a crime prevention initiative that illustrates the relationship between “community vitality” and crime control occurred as a result of a unique partnership between the community and law enforcement aimed at ridding the neighborhood of specific, on-going threats to its community health and cohesion.

*In Providence’s Onleyville neighborhood, criminal justice officials documented that just two residences were responsible for generating literally hundreds of police calls over an eighteen month period. A concerted campaign of the community, police, code enforcement officials, and the Office of the Attorney General was able to bring these trouble spots under control and as a result, neighbors reported that they were able to walk by these properties without fear for the first time in their memory.<sup>3</sup> Providence Police Chief Colonel Sullivan noted: “This is the broken window theory (of community policing) applied only to these specific properties. These were broken properties that ...then poisoned the entire neighborhood...”<sup>4</sup>*

**“All that is required for the triumph of evil is that good people remain silent and do nothing.”**

Sir Edmund Burke

### **The Importance of Broken Windows**

In the above example, the Chief is referring to a seminal crime prevention policy written by Wilson and Kelling, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” first published in The Atlantic in March 1982. It popularized “problem-solving, community policing.” The thesis of their argument is that deteriorating physical environments encourage crime, advertising to law-abiding citizens and criminals alike that the community has, in effect, abandoned the area, ceding

<sup>3</sup> Milkovits, A. (December 2, 2001). Prosecutors Hit Streets to Stop Crime, Providence Journal.

<sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_ (July 13, 2001). AG Nuisance Task Force Works to Condemn, Shut Down Two Providence Crime-Ridden Properties, Rhode Island Department of Attorney General.



it to criminals. The corollary to this is that in order to prevent crime, communities must reclaim their turf by immediately responding to signs of deterioration.

This tendency for communities to decay as a result of poverty and apathy is thought to be exacerbated by the increasing mobility for all but the poorest residents. When residents are unable to leave they are forced to either give up or fight back. The goal of crime prevention programming is to reduce resident fear of crime, join with their law-abiding neighbors, and fight back rather than give up.

In addition, beginning with the placement of crystal radio sets in police cars at the beginning of the last century, modern policing has seen the diminishment of “beat” patrols. This, as a result, has increasingly placed physical and psychological barriers between the police and the residents. As an antidote, crime prevention programming has embraced community policing as an effective way for residents to get to know, and hopefully trust, the police. By taking officers out of squad cars and placing them back on the streets, the gap of “us” versus “them” is able to be bridged. This, in effect, removes a significant potential barrier to creating safe neighborhoods.

**While crime was not impacted during the study, there was an enormous impact upon reduction of citizen fear of crime. This fear reduction has been found to result in residence returning to their communities, rather than remaining house-bound and afraid.**

### **Crime Prevention: Research Findings**

National trends in crime prevention programming are informed and supported by the developing research in the field. Rigorous evaluations of specific crime prevention programs have not been numerous and the few that have been completed have failed to identify any one specific

program that significantly stops crime.<sup>5</sup> Sherman, et al, in their 1998 authoritative and definitive review of crime prevention programs document that “few place-focused crime prevention methods have been studied by criminologists in the United States.”<sup>6</sup> Existing studies of selected community crime prevention programs have had mixed outcomes.

The Police Foundation study focusing on early community policing programs, for example, found that a neighborhood watch experiment in Houston, Texas produced no noticeable reduction in crime compared with a similar area that had not received the program. However, another Houston program that established a police storefront, combining a precinct station, social center and community outreach center, and encouraged officers to engage in personal contact while on patrol found positive findings. While crime was not impacted during the study, there was an enormous impact upon reduction of citizen fear of crime. Household victimizations were reduced by half, improving the attitudes of residents on community issues.<sup>7</sup> This fear reduction has been found to result in residents returning to take an active part in their communities, rather than remaining house-bound and afraid.

After reviewing more than 500 evaluations of crime prevention practices, Sherman, *et al* concluded that “no community-based crime prevention programs proved to be effective at preventing crime.” Specifically, they found that neighborhood watch programs organized with police “fail to reduce burglary or other target crimes, especially in higher crime areas where

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<sup>5</sup> Sherman, L. et. al. (July 1998). Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, National Institute of Justice.

<sup>6</sup> Sherman, L. et. al. (July 1998). Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, National Institute of Justice.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Sherman, L. (1985) Neighborhood Safety, Crime Files, National Institute of Justice; Wycoff, M., Skogan, W., Pate, A., & Sherman, L. (1985). Personal Contact Patrol: The Houston Field Test. Police Foundation.

voluntary participation often fails.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, they found police newsletters with local crime information failed to reduce victimization rates in Newark, New Jersey and Houston, Texas.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand Sherman, *et al* listed several promising programs including community-based mentoring by Big Brother/Big Sister programs, community-based after school recreation programs, and community policing initiatives that involve residents through a series of public meetings intended to set priorities.

### **Alternatives to Crime Rate as a Measure of Community Health**

However such evaluations largely miss the point. It is unrealistic to expect a specific community-based activity such as those funded in Rhode Island to reduce crime in a specific neighborhood within a specific time-period. Attitudinal and behavioral change occurs very slowly. The objective of the Rhode Island Act is to reduce opportunities for crime, and increase the possibility of police apprehension of criminals. These are inputs that contribute to crime control, but they are not its totality. Alternative methods of measuring impact are more appropriate for determining the “health” of a community. These may include, but are certainly not limited to, housing prices, amount of litter, number abandoned buildings, and residents’ attitudes towards and level of fear regarding walking the streets, sending kids to school, using parks and playgrounds.

Despite the fact that evaluations have failed to find much in the way of significant reduction in crime rates, crime prevention programs cannot be expected to directly reduce crime

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<sup>8</sup> Rosenbaum, D. et. al. (1986). Neighborhood-Based Crime Prevention: Assessing the Efficacy of Community Organizing in Chicago. In Rosenbaum, D. (Ed.) Community Crime Prevention: Does it Work? Beverly Hills, CA. Sage; Pate, A. et. al. (1987). The Minneapolis Community Crime Prevention Experiment: Draft Evaluation Report. Washington DC: Police Foundation.

<sup>9</sup> Pate, T., Wycoff, M., Skogan, W. & Sherman, L. (1986). Reducing the Fear of Crime in Newark and Houston. Washington DC: Police Foundation.

in a linear fashion, like specific doses of medicine treat the infection. It is far more probable that neighborhood crime declines (or rises) in graduated increments.

There is a considerable literature that suggests that pro-social, as well as anti-social, activities respond to critical changes in the environment. The result is that a “tipping point” is reached which changes the atmosphere of the neighborhood.<sup>10</sup> The “tipping point phenomenon” operates at many different levels simultaneously. It may, for example, affect community perceptions. If citizens perceive their community to be safer, they may be more likely to venture out. This may, indeed, make the community safer, reducing opportunities for anti-social activities and crime.

This also may have a direct effect on crime reduction. More actively involved citizens may make more demands on local police to increase services. One community police officer observed that in his city, for example, neighborhood associations’ requests for increased services often resulted in a shift of police patrol resources to these communities. In turn, as a result of increased police presence, residents became less fearful of crime and were more likely to become active in the community.

Our analysis of the Act suggests the factors successful community crime prevention programs have in common is that residents at the grassroots, government, and community organizations work in partnership, interweaving enforcement, prevention, and intervention to address existing problems associated with crime and fear of crime, thereby allowing them to nip nascent problems before they mature and prevent other problems from ever developing. Our analysis has also uncovered some measure of success in dealing with crime. Importantly these measures represent a combination of reduction in crime rates as well as alternative

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g. Malcolm Gladwell. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Boston: Little Brown & Co. 2000.

measures that indicate progress. What follows are some significant examples of success within the Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention programs.

*Larcenies and burglaries were reduced by 20% according to Warwick police in the Lincoln Park after the neighborhood got together to work with police to tackle its crime concerns. The success, however, is attributed to both the efforts of the citizens and the police. As a result of community mobilization, neighbors made more calls for services, eliciting augmented police presence in the community. Increased police presence and response reduced crime within just three months according to local police. In this situation, the ability of community police officers to secure the support and cooperation of the patrol division provided paramount.*

Because police cannot respond to all calls or arrest all offenders, even a reduction in crime may not show up in reduced police arrests or reports. In fact, increased demand for services may result from communities that no longer tolerate behaviors previously thought to be impervious to control. And in fact, increasing resident involvement may result in an appearance of increased crime. This is characterized by an improvement in the relationship between residents and the police and results in increased reporting of crimes. When residents come to trust the police and believe that they are willing and able to help, they are more likely, in turn, to reach out to police for assistance. Increased trust of the police may result in the appearance of more crime. (This is akin to increased reports of rape by women when the political environment changed to acknowledge and impart import onto this type of crime. Increased reporting resulted in the appearance of increased victimization, but the reality was that numerous previous victimizations went unreported).

Success may instead be captured by a variety of “civil measures” including housing values increasing, crack houses or gang hang-outs closed, even pizza delivery or taxi service restored in certain neighborhoods. Such measures do not show up in federal, state or even citywide statistics. They must be found at the neighborhood level. Just as crime control must be decentralized, so must its evaluation.

*Even death threats may be a measure of progress! Lenny Lane, the President of the Mount Hope Learning Center, received death threats from elements of the neighborhood that did not welcome the increased attention of law enforcement and scrutiny of their concerned and law-abiding neighbors when the Center opened in its new site on Cypress Street.*

**“The Police Department is good at locking people up. What do you do about prevention?”**

Mt. Hope Neighborhood Residents prior to the Mt. Hope Learning Center project.

### **An Example of a Successful Program:**

#### **Mt. Hope Learning Center**

In response to neighborhood residents’

challenge to do something about preventing crime,

rather than just locking people up after the fact, The

Mt. Hope Learning Center was founded in 1998 by

community members and Providence Community Police Officers to reduce crime in the

Providence neighborhood of Mt. Hope. The Center keeps its mission focused on “providing a

safe and free environment in which the children and adults of the community can learn skills that

will enable them to have productive futures.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Mt. Hope Learning Center informational packet (unpublished) and interviews with Mt. Hope staff.

The Center operated out of a small storefront and held free classes and after-school tutoring for neighborhood children. Adult education classes were added as the Center's popularity grew.<sup>12</sup>

In response to the success of this venture, the Center acquired a large house around the corner from the original storefront. This property was in disrepair and was acquired at a low price. With the assistance of more than 450 volunteers and many donations, the building was fully renovated and the new Center opened its doors in June of 2002. This facility consists of 15 rooms and includes a professional kitchen, computer lab, library, music room, dining room, and offices for Community Police Officer George Pereira and Special Assistant Attorney General James Baum.

The center administers activities for children, adolescents, and adults. Activities include after school programming, one-on-one tutoring, mentoring, girl scouts, piano lessons, computer classes and bookbinding/storytelling for children, portrait drawing, teen job training, pre-college workshops and cooking for adolescents, and basic computer skills, nutrition workshops, and sewing for adults. In addition, the Center runs a summer tutoring program, youth service project for maintenance and beautification of the neighborhood and a block party in Billy Taylor Park.

In a three month period,<sup>13</sup> following the opening of the new facility, the Center served 77 children, 25 adolescents, and 32 adults and seniors. From June 2002 through November 2002 the Center served a total of 213 people in classes and activities. An average of eleven people used the computer labs each week and seventeen children were enrolled in one-on-one tutoring.

The Center is currently staffed by two paid professionals and 62 active volunteers, 28 of whom are Mt. Hope residents.

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<sup>12</sup> Mt. Hope Learning Center informational packet (unpublished) and interviews with Mt. Hope staff.

<sup>13</sup> from 8/1/02 – 11/04/02

Reflecting the success of collaboration between residents, city and state agencies, and elected officials, the Center's Board of Directors is peopled by professionals and neighborhood residents. The professional board members include representatives from area colleges, Providence Police Department, area school principals and educators, State Representatives, an Assistant Attorney General, a City Councilman, a State Senator, two State Representatives, and Center staff. Importantly, in addition to residents, there is also a teen representative on the board. Impressively, the Center also partners with eleven civic and governmental agencies and businesses (from bakeries to concrete vendors).

**“The Mt. Hope Learning Center bridges the gap between the community and law enforcement.”**

Asst. Atty. Gen. William Guglietta

During this first year of operation out of their new facility, the Center is in the process of initiating new funding, recruiting new volunteers (particularly successful men of color for the mentoring program), and attracting more youth and adolescents from the neighborhood into their after school programs. The successful nature of this program and its impact on the neighborhood can be measured in many different ways, including the successful beautification of the neighborhood and park, the number of neighborhood residents actively involved in the Center, both participants and volunteers, and the increased interaction between neighborhood residents and police.

### **The Role of Community Policing (and what happens when it isn't working)**

In many respects, despite the dramatic fiscal decline of the United States Justice Department's Community Oriented Policing Program, the Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program has helped keep community policing alive in Rhode Island. While many police administrators praise community policing in theory, it appears to have taken root only in a



limited number of communities, in particular, those with strong, grass roots community groups who in many cases are sustained, in part, by the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program. In Providence, for example, it was an organized community association that successfully lobbied the police to retain its community police officer at the same time the program largely ended elsewhere across the City.

*Where community policing is strong, neighborhood groups have nothing but praise for the level of cooperation they receive from local law enforcement. Where community policing is weak or non-existent, similar groups report nothing but frustration dealing with local police. Several reported bypassing their local law enforcement agencies in order to*

Promoted in the 1990's as the best vehicle for crime prevention programming, community policing would have largely collapsed in many Rhode Island police departments without the careful nurturing and encouragement provided by the crime prevention program and related funding. Neighborhood groups increase the articulated demand for community policing, making it easier for local police administrators to respond with innovative, organization and policy reforms to accommodate community policing.

While the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act may provide grants directly to municipal agencies like the police as well as community-based citizen groups, all grants must “coordinate (their) activities with existing police agencies (§42-96-3(c)(D)).” For this reason, community policing programs and grant activities are closely related and, in many instances, rely on each

other. As a result, we must necessarily look at community policing in order to look at the overall impact and implementation of the Act.

At the local level, numerous police departments have experimented with establishing community policing programs over the past five or six years. Enactment of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act occurred at the same time as community policing was beginning to capture attention. The United States Justice Department Community Oriented Policing Office that committed millions of dollars to hire 100,000 community oriented police officers across the nation was not established, however, until the mid-1990s.

Community policing broadly refers to a variety of strategies that attempt to get the police away from rapid response to service and closer to the community on a day to day basis. Order-maintenance, community crime prevention, problem solving, neighbor safety, foot or bike patrol, and a host of police-community relations strategies are all included under community policing. The correlates to community policing in the remainder of the criminal justice system include community-based corrections, community prosecution and crime prevention programs.

The impact of the community policing movement in Rhode Island has been irregular, short-lived in some departments, and somewhat deeply rooted in others. Where community policing has gained traction in the police department, it has worked closely and effectively with community groups receiving neighborhood crime prevention funding. Where it has not taken root, its lack has hampered the impact of community crime prevention efforts, isolating and limiting the programs' impact.

A successful example of how community policing and community efforts to prevent crime can enhance each other is found in Warwick. The first community police officer was assigned nine years ago. The first officer selected was a Conimicut beat officer who was

intimately familiar with his beat and requested the assignment. Since then the program has expanded to six officers and a Sergeant evenly divided across three Districts working out of offices located in Oakland Beach, Conimicut, and the Rhode Island Mall. The Unit is part of the Community Police Division. Among other things the community police unit is responsible for “crime watch group development, crime prevention presentations to home and business owners, fundamental alcohol intoxication recognition for liquor establishment employees and owners, elderly affairs presentations, mediation and problem solving, and the Citizen Police Academy.”

*According to the Warwick Police: “Community Policing is both a philosophy and an organizational strategy that allows the police and the community residents to work closely together in new ways to solve the problems of crime, the fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighborhood decay. The philosophy rests on the belief that law-abiding people in the community deserve input into the police process in exchange for their participation and support.”<sup>14</sup>*

Further, according to Warwick police, community policing “requires a department-wide commitment from everyone, civilian and sworn, to promote the community policing philosophy...with a goal of exploring new proactive initiatives aimed at solving problems before they occur or escalate.” To work, officers must be decentralized where they can enjoy autonomy to operate as community-based problem solvers who work directly with the community making neighborhoods better and safer.” Community police officers are available to their communities during their entire shifts, except in the event of an emergency where they are required for back up.

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<sup>14</sup> Warwick Police Web page, ([www.warwickpd.org/2001AnnualReport/http](http://www.warwickpd.org/2001AnnualReport/http)).

According to the Warwick police, the first concern of neighborhoods throughout the City is traffic, followed by neighborhood disputes, and responding to a rash of housebreaks and stolen vehicles in select neighborhoods. Other concerns included graffiti, malicious damage, and other nuisance crimes. To address these concerns, community police officers in the three districts intervened to increase citizen communication with the Traffic Division resulting in several enforcement programs created to help enforce traffic violations within the neighborhoods. They also handled over fifty neighborhood disputes through the use of mediation and problem-solving techniques, freeing up patrol division involvement in repeat incidents. They also worked with Detectives and Patrol Divisions to target housebreaks and stolen vehicles, initiating special bicycles patrols, and both unmarked and marked patrols. Community policing solicits and relies on intelligence gleaned from the community.

*A rash of fires plagued a wooded area in the Nausauket area of Warwick. Police officers came to the neighborhood association for assistance. As a result of its close working relationship with many of the neighborhood youth, the Associate was able to provide police with the names of the youths responsible. As a result, the youths were arrested and the fires stopped.*

*Warwick police were alerted to a nascent gang forming in the Pontiac area of the city by a Pontiac Neighborhood Association meeting community police attended. Officers were told some citizens were afraid to call them out of fear of reprisals from gang members. The community information gave police a heads up on GDIFOLK, an affiliate of the CRIPS gang, complete with special colors and drug dealing. As a result, eight arrests were made and police focused on engaging local youth in activities to discourage gang recruitment, including allowing youth to use community police headquarters.*

While Warwick police can point to a 20% crime reduction (larceny and burglary) associated with their partnership with a specific neighborhood association, perhaps the more telling endorsement of the efficacy of community policing in Warwick comes from the fact that community members active in crime prevention raised \$3,500 that they donated for Warwick police physical fitness equipment!

By contrast, lacking consistent support from the chief on down, Providence police largely disbanded its community policing program since its original inception in the 1990s. At its height, the Providence police had opened seven community police storefronts across the City. Within a few years, all were shut down. Today, the Department has only two designated community police officers, one stationed at the Mount Hope Learning Center. At least one Neighborhood Association commented that it wasn't worth its while to fight to maintain the position of community police officer assigned its community. First, officers came and went so fast, they did not get to know the community. They had seven different officers assigned in just over two years. Second, every time there was a need for additional police manpower, the community officers were reassigned, resulting in resentment within the community.

In Cranston, according to community activists, federal Housing and Urban Development officials offered police a free substation in the Riverbend Housing complex. The Chief turned them down, concerned that officers would be diverted by the residents from their duties.

The Providence Police Chief who closed the storefronts explained that community policing is a philosophy, not a matter of designating specific officers. All officers, he asserted, should be community police officers. However, according to its advocates, community policing requires a commitment from the top down to this new approach. It cannot endure based on the enthusiasm of individual officers or even middle-management. It is more than just "old

fashioned” beat patrol. It is reaching out to the entire community, soliciting its concerns and then responding to them as a matter of priority.

*A Planning Committee member complained that some police departments regard the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act as a funding source for expensive traffic signs, disregarding its crime prevention mandate and purpose.*

Even in Warwick, where community policing is largely successful, advocates point out that the three districts in which the community police officers are divided are far too large to allow officers to concentrate sufficiently on any one neighborhood to do the job as it should or could be done.

While there are a number of officers across Rhode Island familiar with and committed to community policing, they do not appear to have achieved enough of a critical mass to influence their larger police organizations. Unlike Ohio and elsewhere, organizations such as the Chiefs of Police in Rhode Island have not been strong advocates or conduits for advancing community policing efforts. The Municipal police training academy does not offer specialized curriculum devoted to community policing for recruits or in-service training for officers. Although originally founded by Rhode Island Chiefs of Police, chiefs do not provide overtime funding for designated community police officers to attend Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association quarterly meetings.

### **Other Related Community Crime Prevention Initiatives**

In addition to police, other criminal justice agencies have initiated, however, tentatively, related community crime prevention efforts. Like community policing, these efforts work with

and to a large extent rely on neighborhood crime prevention efforts encouraged and funded by the Act.

The former state Attorney General, Sheldon Whitehouse, launched a crime prevention program for that office with the establishment of community prosecution programs in Providence. In January 2000, he also appointed a full time Crime Prevention Specialist on his staff, John Reis, a retired Providence Police Lieutenant, who was responsible for setting up the first police storefronts in that City in the early 1990s. Before his departure from that position after the election of a new Attorney General, he characterized his position as “still evolving” in that Office.

The roots of the community prosecution program can be traced back to a federal community prosecution program administered by the American Prosecution Research Institute, the research arm of the National College of District Attorneys, as well as the Kindling Program, a local initiative sponsored by Rhode Island Attorney General Whitehouse, begun in the Elmwood community of Providence in the spring of 2001. The program was originally limited to civil environmental enforcement cases with several Assistant Attorney Generals working out of the local Community Center to respond to public nuisances. Initially, the nuisance task force used the law to respond to community problems, acting as a dispatcher, crime-mapper for police, and code enforcer. These efforts involved agencies not associated with traditional law enforcement such as the City Department of Public Works as well community police officers, detectives, ACI intelligence unit, and others.

As community prosecution evolved it came to include criminal investigations and prosecution. Criminal investigation and prosecution are advanced through periodic meetings of law enforcement, including patrol, detectives, SSD, federal Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms

agents, ACI Investigations Unit and others targeting, among others, identified problem individuals. The agencies share community intelligence. If criminal prosecutions result, the Attorney General allows for vertical prosecution so that the community prosecutor handles the case from start to finish. This is of particular importance given Rhode Island's *de novo* court organization that provides that any conviction, even misdemeanors, may be appealed to superior court.<sup>15</sup> While these cases include nuisance abatement aimed toward cleaning up specific addresses responsible for generating numerous police calls, they have also included serious criminal cases that have resulted in long prison sentences. Community prosecution also depends upon neighbor crime watches to provide intelligence and assist in setting prosecution priorities.

By targeting both individuals and residences that generate chronic crime activity, the community prosecution program attempts to stabilize communities. At a certain point, enough residents feel secure that there is reached a "tipping point" where residents no longer experience the fear that keep them off the streets, uninvolved with their neighbors, and powerless to prevent crime. In turn, increased neighborhood involvement provides more direction for law enforcement and prosecutors to weed out crime and criminogenic neighborhood conditions. The program has assisted in the development of more than a half dozen "neighborhood watch programs." Organizers choose this nomenclature believing that adding "crime" to the title may scare away participants. One of the watch groups attempted to apply for Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act funding but missed the deadline for applications.

The success of the community prosecution program can be measured by both its support from the Providence City Council, concerned only that it was not involved in the establishment of the program, and the requests received from Pawtucket, Central Walls and Westerly police

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<sup>15</sup> Typically, locally appointed solicitors prosecute cases in the District Court while Assistant Attorney Generals prosecute the same cases tried in Superior Court.



and civil officials asking the Attorney General to expand the program into their communities. Limited resources have prevented the program was expanding. The current Community Prosecutor, James Baum, Special Assistant Attorney General, is housed in Mt. Hope Learning Center, funded, in part, by the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program.

The state's Department of Correction's parole and probation department and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families have also initiated community-based crime prevention efforts, active in the same neighborhoods as community prosecution. These neighborhoods have received substantial Neighborhood Crime Prevention funds. Safe Streets Providence represents a police department, adult and juvenile probation and parole partnership targeting juvenile and adult released offenders, in particular those that pose the largest threat to public safety. It focuses on 16 through 25 year olds who are disproportionately responsible for crime. These are the youth who, released from the Training School or ACI, resume habits of associating with gang members and other offenders, avoiding school or legitimate employment and ultimately engaging in criminal activity. A relatively small number of offenders are responsible for a large proportion of violent crime. Targeted youth have a prior arrest history of violent crime, sex offenses, gang involvement, felony domestic violence and drug offenses.<sup>16</sup>

While adults are supervised by state Department of Correction parole and probation officers, juveniles are supervised by officers from the state Department for Children, Youth and Families. The Safe Streets program employs three juvenile probation officers as well as three adult probation officers supervised by a juvenile probation supervisor.

Unlike traditional probation officers, these probation officers work 2 to 10 p.m., including Saturday and Sunday shifts. The adult caseload is restricted to felons, 25-years old and

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<sup>16</sup> \_\_\_\_ (Undated). Safe Streets Providence, Program Summary, Department of Children, Youth and Families, Department of Corrections, City of Providence, Juvenile Probation and Parole, Adult Probation and Parole.

younger. The juvenile caseload is almost exclusively juveniles released from the Rhode Island Training School. Supervision is intensive, community-based, designed to enforce special conditions tailored to keep these offenders under tight monitoring in the community. Most offenders are ordered to submit to random periodic drug tests to enforce abstinence. The tests are performed at the Providence Center for Adults and Roger Williams Hospital for juveniles. Juveniles, in particular, are ordered to obey curfews and to stay away from “danger zone exclusion areas,” areas known for drug dealing and other crimes. Weekly visits are made by probation officers accompanied by Providence police detectives. The cooperation and presence of police officers allows probation officers to visit areas of the City once considered dangerous, especially after dark.

In addition, probation/parole officers closely coordinate offender activities in the community in areas of employment, school attendance, counseling, family communication, and recreation. In order to foster community involvement and reduce fear, the program is designed to maintain visibility in the community. Officers maintain extensive contacts with school authorities, exchange information regarding offenders with treatment providers, meet with family members and make referrals to appropriate community resources.

A federal juvenile justice grant funds the juvenile portion of the program and a motor vehicle. The Department of Corrections provides funding for the adult officers as well as contributes up to \$50,000 a year to for police overtime costs. The program began admitting probationers in July 2000. The federal grant runs out next September however; the Department of Corrections is seeking additional Byrne grant money to expand Safe Streets to Pawtucket.

The three juvenile probation officers carry caseloads of approximately 75 youths. The two adult probation officers carry caseloads of between 50 and 60 ex-offenders, including non-

Safe Streets probationers on intensive probation supervision. Initially, prosecutors and courts did not identify prospective adults for the program and the Department tried to establish caseloads from probation violators. However, eventually according to the Unit director, the Attorney General's Office developed procedures to identify prospective defendants at pre-arraignment conferences and request appropriate conditions for participation in the Safe Streets Unit.

The Unit works with the community prosecutor program. For example, the community prosecutor identified a specific youth arrested in the Mt. Hope neighborhood, deemed responsible for many problems in that community. Although his first adult misdemeanor charge would have normally warranted only minimal supervision, the youth was instead placed under Safe Streets supervision, complete with specific probationary conditions to ensure that he take necessary medication and attend counseling to stabilize his position in the community. Probationers in the program also provide criminal intelligence to their supervising probation officers who, in turn, pass it on to police detectives.

Although caseloads are not based on geography, but rather on the skills of the individual probation officers, particularly language skills as one Unit officer speaks Spanish and another Mong, the program is restricted to offenders living in Providence. The juveniles monitored by Safe Streets are also targeted for participation in a federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services grant program entitled Project Hope which is administered by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families that provides wrap-around services and outreach workers for many of the same youth.

There are also several federal initiatives currently operating in Rhode Island, focused on promoting crime prevention, including the recently established U.S. Justice Department program called Project Safe Neighborhood, specifically targeting gun violence, and the Serious and

Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, focusing on juvenile and adult inmates returning to the community. The initiative in Rhode Island for released offenders is in the planning stage, intending to open in conjunction with the Family Life Center, a consortium of several dozen service and treatment agencies.

All of these disparate community crime prevention initiatives must rely on the same thing to work most effectively. They must tap into the community at the grass-roots level. Making this link work, however, consists of more than paper pledges of cooperation and endorsements submitted on funding applications. It requires hard work, involving constant nurturing, and continuous attention. Without this continuing effort, many community-based associations fade over time. Historically, neighborhood crime watch programs, for example, coalesce around a specific crime-related crisis only to dissipate as the immediate problem is either overcome or proves intractable. Outside agencies can help nurture and institutionalize community efforts just as community efforts are necessary to nurture and institutionalize the efforts of the outside agencies in their neighborhood.

In the absence of any other sustained resources, the neighborhood crime prevention program and the coalitions that have grown up around it represent the core “community” of the state’s “community”-crime prevention efforts, tying together, at least on an ad hoc basis, varied disparate efforts in the Office of the Attorney General, community police, probation and parole, juvenile probation and the Department of Corrections that together make up the state’s overall crime prevention program.

Many Neighborhood Crime Prevention grantees have been able to tap into these related crime prevention programs to varying degrees to enhance not only the effectiveness of their own community crime prevention programs but the effectiveness of these federal, state and local

programs. Perhaps the best prototype of this cooperative model can be found in the Providence Mt. Hope Learning Center. The physical Center not only houses community meeting rooms and computers used for after school programs for neighborhood youth but also the offices of a community prosecutor from the Office of the Attorney General and a community police officer from the Providence Police Department.<sup>17</sup> In one physical setting, we find representatives of multiple agencies able to coordinate and work together to translate crime prevention efforts to fit that community.

### **The Importance of Involving Youth**

Although the Act singles out only “senior citizens” for special attention, when considering ways to reduce crime and the fear of crime it among seniors it is vitally important to focus on youth and adolescents. People, particularly seniors, tend to be afraid of adolescents.

Juvenile crime and delinquency, although currently on a decline from the highest rate of 1993, remains a significant problem. In 1999, youth and adolescents represented an alarming 45% of all persons arrested. Youth were also arrested for 44% of the violent crimes and 58% of the property crimes committed in 1999. Despite the decline, crime rates remain higher than those of the 1980s for all types of offenses.<sup>18</sup>

The causes and correlates of juvenile crime are complex. One central theory of juvenile crime contends risk factors, both within and surrounding the individual place him at increased risk for poor outcome. The larger the number of risk factors a child is exposed to, the more

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<sup>17</sup> The latter, we are advised, with the assistance of youthful volunteers, also serves up tasty meals at the Center!

<sup>18</sup> Snyder, H.N. (2000). Juvenile Arrests 1999. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

likely he is to experience problems. Some of these risk factors include high rates of crime, unemployment, poverty, and infant mortality, therefore potentially negatively affecting the youth of an entire community.

The reality is that young males are the most common victims and perpetrators, due primarily to the fact that they spend a lot of time outside, on the street. The key to reducing victimizing and victimization by and of adolescents is to engage them in constructive activity. It is predicted that increased engagement of youth in positive activities will cause a measurable decline in nuisance and street crime because alienated, disengaged youth form the bulk of offenders threatening public order, safety and property.

In addition, it is particularly important to engage youth in neighborhood crime prevention efforts. It is insufficient to merely occupy the time of youth instead they should be allowed to drive the initiative. The intent should be to develop in these youth a passionate involvement and commitment. They should be encouraged to become stakeholders in their own neighborhoods at a young age.

When special at-risk populations, such as youth, are the focus, it is especially essential to engage the community. Research has documented, for example, that “two of the characteristic traits of youth who fall into delinquent lifestyles are a lack of attachment to caring adults and a lack of involvement in school and other positive, pro-social activities in their communities- an after school program, a job, church community service... A second valuable leveler for change is a cadre of engaged and informed leaders at the local level.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mendel, R. (2000). Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works- and What Doesn't. Washington DC, American Youth Policy Forum.

*Questioned about the efficacy of crime prevention funding encouraging block parties and youth oriented programming, the President of the Tenant's and Resident's Crime Watch in Cranston's Riverbend Housing Complex, a low-income housing project consisting of 168 units and populated by over 125 juveniles, explained that such activities make residents, especially teens, "happier to live here, realize it's not so bad." Less than ten years ago resident youth were so angry, they barricaded the manager's office and kicked in the windows. They wanted video game machines. The compromise: the youth were required to earn half the money for the machines. Now these project youth periodically clean up the fields bordering the complex, make use of computers housed in the manager's office, and attend arts and crafts classes on site. The after-school program is vital to this community due to the fact that the children have no transportation to the "Y" or other outside programs. Community-wide appreciation for the Crime Watch's efforts can be measured by donations and subsidies of food and party supplies*

In order to "address the needs of senior citizens (§42-96-3(c)(B))" as required by the Act, many of the grants target youths. Rather than respond after youths have already gotten into trouble, the traditional intervention model utilized by the criminal justice system and courts, the programs try to engage youth before they join gangs, get into trouble and establish criminal careers. They attempt to reach these youths before they reach the courts, probation caseloads and juvenile correctional facilities. Rather than fearing youth as potential problems, they treat

them as potential community resources by promoting their positive involvement in the community.

*The Nausauket Neighborhood Association was formed to deal with bullying and youth violence and challenge an increasingly bad reputation for drug problems in the community. Community police officers paved the way, introducing residents to crime prevention through Warwick's Citizen Police Academy. Among other activities, the Association engages youth in tending the yards of elderly residents for their increased protection. The effort began after several area youth sponsored by community volunteers to receive CPR training, were credited with saving the life of an elderly resident. She had fallen in her front yard one winter night, shielded from passersby behind tall, unkempt hedges. Fortunately the teenagers noticed her and revived her before she froze to death.*

**“Though citizens can do a great deal, the police are plainly the key to order maintenance”.**

Wilson and Kelling “Broken Windows”

### **The Importance of Collaboration**

As mentioned previously, the structure of the funding for Neighborhood Crime Prevention is set up in such a way that neither the police nor community

groups can receive funding without each other. But the reality is that collaboration is not easy and requires significant effort and incentive to be effective. To make these alliances work, agencies must adopt new approaches and accept new missions. This may also mean breaking down barriers, mistrust, and suspicions that have grown over the years between the community and these governmental agencies and institutions.



*The West Elmwood Housing and Development Corporation received Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act funding to administer RESPECT to bridge the wall of distrust and suspicion between cops and kids. West Elmwood contains 62% of the youth in Providence and is the home of five identified youth gangs. With the assistance of the Attorney General's crime prevention planner and the cooperation of the Providence Police Department, the Association sponsored a series of meetings between community youth and police officers to encourage active engagement. Endorsed by the New England Crime Prevention Council, the Providence YMCA director lauds the program for its continuing positive impact in the community.*

However, in some communities there is no effective collaboration between the community groups and the police and even within the community itself. The simple process of applying for neighborhood crime prevention funding becomes burdensome when phone calls are not returned and cooperation is difficult.

*Prior efforts of the Riverbend Crime Watch were thwarted because of difficulties in cooperation and collaboration from many different sources including the Cranston Police Department, the management of the complex, as well as some of the residents of the complex. At times there was little communication between the Crime Watch and police (calls were not returned, applications for funding were not completed). The president of the Riverbend Crime Watch noted that Cranston's police approach to crime involved traditional strategies, avoiding implementing new policies and practices like community policing. Yet the Crime Watch found that alternative private security at the complex did not help. Officials also found that many of the complex residents refused to cooperate because of their own illicit drug activities. In response, the Crime Watch recruited members from outside the complex, explaining that although "outsiders," these members of the larger Cranston community are also impacted by the crime generated within the complex.*

**“Communities must draw the line (in terms of) what crime they will tolerate. If the community feels it is hopeless, it will not draw that line.”**

Providence crime prevention service provider

### **The Importance of Collective Efficacy**

The general objective of the Act is to contribute to what researchers have termed “collective efficacy,” mutual trust among neighbors combined with willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good.<sup>20</sup> In many respects, crime

prevention is a measure of community cohesion. While a block party may not on its face appear to be linked to crime prevention, to the extent it fosters community ties it may directly produce the “collective efficacy” that prevents crime.

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<sup>20</sup> Sampson, R., Raudenbush, S. & Earls, F. (1998). Neighborhood Collective Efficacy- Does it Help Reduce Violence? Science. See, e.g. Black, M., Rollins, S. & Ignacio, C. (1999). Building Effective Community Partnerships, Institute for Educational Leadership, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

On the federal level, the efficacy of this crime prevention model is demonstrated by the promotion of “Project Safe Neighborhoods” administered by the United States Justice Department. It is based on community participation in federal efforts to increase federal gun prosecutions. In Rhode Island, this has meant funding for a crime mapping initiative at Roger Williams University and a citizen education campaign administered by Justice Assistance.

On the state level, the Rhode Island Justice Commission allocated \$60,000 in 2002 for “Cops That Care,” a grant program that made \$1,500 available to each police department in order to bring police and community together. Each police department was given wide latitude in how to spend the funds. It should be noted that, statewide, police departments used this money to fund the same types of programs promoted by the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act. This is the case regardless of the fact that the majority of the Act programs were administered by community-based citizen associations and the “Cops That Care” programs were administered solely by police departments. In other words, there was no significant divergence in crime prevention programming whether initiated by police or community groups.

## **Summary**

- 1. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program plays a significant, positive role in advancing public safety in Rhode Island by enhancing community recognition of its role and responsibility in responding to crime.**
- 2. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program plays a significant role in enhancing the environment in which related crime prevention programs, including the Attorney General's community prosecution program and community policing programs can function.**
- 3. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program has helped foster community after-school programs that target at-risk youth in several communities.**
- 4. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program successfully targets those communities with the greatest crime challenge.**
- 5. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program has sustained the continued existence of the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association.**

While the individual grants are very small by state standards, their very size encourages grantees to use them strategically and in conjunction with other agencies, including local police, in order to maximize their impact. Also, because funding is limited, grantees do not have to compete with larger, older, and better structured organizations that receive the lion's share of other criminal justice and related grant funding. While individual grantees often are endorsed by local political representatives, the program is noticeably immune from political pressures to fund particular constituencies or programs.

*The Pontiac Neighborhood Association receives the smallest grant from Neighborhood Crime Prevention, only \$500 in 2001. But it is enough to help maintain the organization through a signature annual neighborhood block party. One may question how this relates to crime prevention. According to police, the Association, by networking among its members, was able to assemble information on nascent gang activity that threatened to infect their neighborhood and spread across the entire City. Its communication to police resulted in a quick police response and the immediate arrest of eight different gang members.*

**6. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program has largely failed to tell its story that crime prevention is, and should remain, an important part in the overall local and state response to crime.**

While thanks to the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act Grant Program the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association directly and indirectly is responsible for the dissemination of tens of thousands of pieces of crime prevention literature each year across the state, there is little apparent recognition among state and local criminal justice leaders of the role of crime prevention in the state and local responses to crime. Current efforts in this direction are scattered and limited to specific neighborhoods, mostly in Providence. The Justice Commission, charged, among other things, with developing a statewide strategy to respond to crime has not made crime prevention a top priority. Given extremely limited staff resources, the Justice Commission functions principally to administer large federal grant programs to the major state criminal justice, law enforcement and related recognized state victim service agencies. It has not attempted to

coordinate crime prevention efforts among the various justice agencies across the state, notwithstanding the fact that most sit on its board.

Even though Rhode Island is a small, compact state, successful crime prevention programs in one community are largely unknown in another. Even programs offered by the state Attorney General or Department of Corrections in one area of the state are unknown elsewhere.

There is no consistent crime mapping efforts statewide to identify where certain crimes are most prevalent or where released inmates or youths released from the state training school are located.

**7. The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program does not provide sufficient technical assistance to ensure that model programs are replicated across the state.**

Although the Program lacks, by and large, designated staff to provide technical assistance to community associations and police departments seeking to enhance crime prevention, there is a lot of information exchange among crime prevention activities in and out of the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association.

*Lenny Long, President of the Mount Hope Learning Center, reports he received valuable assistance and ideas as a result of a visit to the Oakland Beach program before establishing the Mt. Hope Learning Center. Such informal mentoring arranged by Justice Commission Crime Prevention Coordinator Gail Pereira, as well as periodic meetings of the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association, act as conduits of technical assistance and information exchange among programs and individuals concerned with crime prevention.*

In addition, the Office of the Attorney General also had one full time crime prevention specialist that has provided training at conferences, technical assistance to communities in the last administration. However, there is no formal effort to coordinate programs of state and local agencies with crime prevention community associations to develop model programs. Rather there exists a loose network of enthusiasts and committed individuals who take it upon themselves to spread the word and assist others. Consequently, crime prevention funding, for example, has not reached certain communities, including specific ethnic communities.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Increase budget for crime prevention grants.**

The program should be funded as a line item in the state budget so that legislators can be asked to specifically expand such grass roots programs in their communities.

While we do not advise dramatic increases in individual grant size, increasing the total number of programs funded will dramatically enhance the likelihood that these programs will achieve the critical mass in their respective communities needed to impact local and even state law enforcement, criminal justice and other related agencies necessary to develop a comprehensive, integrated crime prevention program. Among other things, an increase in the number of neighborhood associations will encourage police departments to create or expand existing community policing efforts as well as enhance the effectiveness of community policing programs that already exist. Warwick, for example,

has seventeen different active neighborhood associations involved in its crime prevention upon which the six community police officers rely.

**2. A set percentage of funding should be earmarked specifically for “high impact” neighborhoods.**

These include neighborhoods where a disproportionate number of state training school and ACI inmates return to upon release. These funds should encourage neighborhood associations and groups to meet the challenge of helping to successfully reintegrate these offenders back into the community safely. These programs, in addition to partnering with local law enforcement, should partner with the Department of Corrections Parole and Probation and the Department of Children, and Youth and Families.

**3. Provide additional funding from current federal grants for a full time crime prevention specialist position in the Justice Commission.**

In addition to administering the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program, this position will be responsible for working with the Justice Commission and member agencies to develop a statewide strategic crime prevention program for the State of Rhode Island in concert with Justice Commission staff. The plan should tie together, creating a master plan for implementation of community policing, probation and parole Safe Streets, the Department of Corrections Re-entry program and the Department of Attorney General’s Community Prosecution statewide as appropriate funded with existing and future block grants received by the Justice Commission. It is not



recommended, however, that such a position be funded in lieu of local, community crime prevention grants but from additional monies obtained from different funding sources.

The crime prevention specialist, under the auspices of the Justice Commission, should convene a statewide roundtable of representatives of the major crime prevention programs funded by the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act, the Attorney General's community prosecution program, Probation and Parole and Department of Children, Youth and Families' Safe Streets initiative, the Department of Corrections and Family Life Center's Serious and Violent Offender Re-Entry Initiative, as well as Justice Commission staff involved in Cops That Care and its major block grants. The roundtable should advise the specialists how existing, scattered programs may be coalesced into a statewide crime prevention program and the strategic plan to reach that goal.

**4. Provide funding for the RICPA to establish an annual statewide crime prevention fair for all funded groups to present overviews of their activities.**

The only time Neighborhood grant recipients are required to meet as a group currently is to apply for funding. The annual fair we propose will serve as a focal point for grass roots crime prevention efforts, networking and information exchange among those involved in community crime prevention and those interested in joining. This would be an ideal time, for example, for annual awards given to community crime fighters or exemplary programs as RICPA used to do. Efforts should be made to encourage positive competition among groups, for example, to sponsor the best neighborhood beautification program, take-back-the night activity, or after school program for at risk and proven risk youths or block party with the most donated

hotdogs...Such an annual fair and prizes will increase the visibility to grass roots efforts. This in turn will showcase to legislators how the money they appropriate is being spent.

**5. Amend R.I. Gen. Laws §42-96-6 by adding second section:**

**6(a): Effective with the class beginning July 1, 2004, and for each class thereafter, the curriculum for new law enforcement officers presented at the Providence academy, the state police academy and the municipal police academy, shall include at least eight (8) hours of training on community policing and neighborhood crime prevention issues.**

**6(b): Each law enforcement agency shall provide four (4) hours of in-service training to its officers on issues of community policing and neighborhood crime prevention issues.**

**6(c): It shall be the responsibility of the Justice Commission to develop a model training curriculum in community policing and neighborhood crime prevention to implement training mandated in 6(a) and 6(b). In developing its model curriculum, the Commission shall consult with community police officers, the Rhode Island Crime Prevention Association and neighborhood crime prevention associations contracted pursuant to §42-96-3.**

The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Act requires cooperation between community crime associations and local law enforcement. Our review reinforces the research that suggests that such cooperation is more efficacious where law enforcement has encouraged, adopted and implemented community policing programs. While training alone will not prompt local police departments to adopt or expand existing community policing programs, they should at least make police more receptive to and supportive of the role of community groups funded under the Act enhancing their effectiveness.

In the final analysis, crime prevention cannot be confined to a single or even multiple programs. It is a part of a community's overall strategic response to crime. That is why the current crime prevention efforts have been able to have a larger impact than their limited funding might suggest. They have kept alive the ideal of crime prevention, encouraging some of the neediest communities to organize and take responsibility for their own protection as well as nurturing and promoting positive relationships with local law enforcement, the Department of Corrections, and the Office of the Attorney General.

## **Appendix A. Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Program Organization**

# Rhode Island Neighborhood Crime Prevention Organizational Chart 2002

